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SUBJECT: VIEW ON UNICEF COUNTRY PROGRAM FOR KUWAIT

REF: STATE 125431

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¶1. (SBU) Post welcomes the invitation to offer input regarding UNICEF programs in Kuwait. Embassy concurs that the areas in greatest need of attention are advocacy for marginalized children, childhood education, and child protection programs. Post commends UNICEF's focus in Kuwait on opportunities for Bidoon children, jobs skills training for adolescents, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and encourages that motor vehicle safety be added to the health component.

¶2. (SBU) Bidoon children are clearly the most critical target group for child advocacy programs. These largely disenfranchised children are at high risk for turning to violent extremism due to a lack of educational opportunities, job prospects and social services. The freedoms and opportunities of bidoon children are still severely restricted compared to those of children with full Kuwaiti citizenship.

¶3. (SBU) In the area of education, the Government of Kuwait's efforts to shift labor from the public to the private sector mean that the next generation of the Kuwaiti work force will need to develop a new set of skills to compete for meaningful jobs. With approximately ninety percent of Kuwaitis employed in the public sector, employment is currently considered an entitlement guaranteed by the Government. However, the gradual depletion of Kuwaiti oil reserves and the privatization of the economy will place new demands on the next generation of the Kuwaiti work force. Kuwait's education system has not yet adjusted to meet the demands of a private-sector dominated economy. In the absence of improved curricula and teaching methods, Kuwaitis will find themselves ill-equipped to compete in the global marketplace. Education programs promoting healthy lifestyles are also needed to address the growing problems of childhood obesity and type 1 diabetes.

¶4. (SBU) Finally, in the area of child protection, programs should address the high incidence of deaths and injuries to children involved in traffic accidents. Post knows of no official statistics, but anecdotally, the death rate for vehicular accidents in Kuwait is relatively high. Insufficient use of child safety seats is suspected to be a major contributing factor to this problem.

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